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The absolute Necessity of unfeigned Repentance and Humiliation, in order to secure the divine Favour and Protection, and to prevent a sinful Nation from Ruin and Destruction.

693.e.22
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Being the Substance of

TWO DISCOURSES

Preached at the
SUNDAY-MORNING LECTURE
IN THE
Parish Church of St. GILES, Cripplegate;

And afterwards in
CHRIST-CHURCH, Newgate-Street,
On February the 13th, 1761.

The Day appointed by Proclamation for a general Fast and Humiliation before Almighty God, to be observed in the most devout and solemn Manner, by offering up our Supplications to the Divine Majesty:

For obtaining Pardon of our Sins, and for averting those heavy Judgments which our manifold Provocations have most justly deserved, and imploring God's Blessing and Assistance on the Arms of his Majesty, and for restoring and perpetuating Peace and Prosperity to himself, and to his Kingdoms.

To which are added,

Considerations on the Mischiefs and Miseries that are occasioned by our unreasonable Divisions, and violently contending about useless Speculations, and unprofitable Doctrines.

By the Rev. Mr. THOMAS SMITH,
Preacher of the said Morning Lecture, and likewise of the Thursday Afternoon, in the same Church.

L O N D O N:

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TWO DISCOURSES

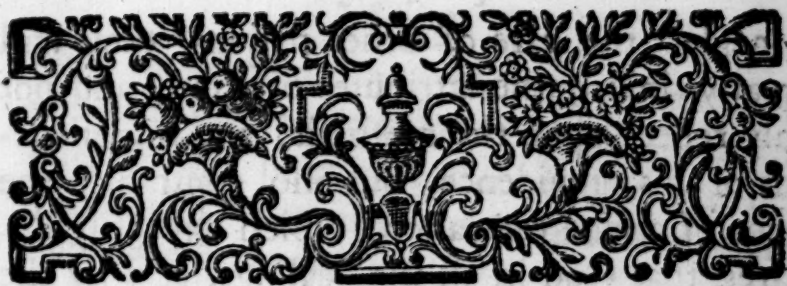
SUNDAY-MORNING LECTURE

Paris, Church of St. Louis

Christ-Church, New York



RECEIVED



HOSEA X. 12.

*Sow to yourselves in righteousness, reap in mercy,
break up your fallow ground. For it is time
to seek the Lord, until he come and rain right-
eousness among you.*

G O D who is the sole moral gover-
nor of the world, and the constant
preserver of all intelligent beings,
has an absolute dominion over all
nations, and sufficient authority to exalt or de-
press whatsoever kingdoms he pleases, without
rendering any account of his proceedings, or
previously acquainting us with his intentions.
Accordingly, God by virtue of his indisputable
right, and by the rules of unerring wisdom,
and perfect goodness, distinguished the Hebrew
nation by signal marks of kindness and special
spiritual priviledges above all others, not from
any partial regard to that nation, or because the
Hebrews were more deserving of his favours.

Should any be so weak as to imagine, that be-
cause God chose the people of *Israel*, and form-
ed them into a separate community, he there-
by so confined his mercies to them, as wholly

to neglect the care of other nations, they will greatly injure the attributes of God, and not only reflect upon the methods, and dispensations of his providence, but also contradict the tenor of divine revelation, which expressly declares, that God in all his dealings, acts by the rules of righteousness, and is no respecter of persons. It is evident then to every unprejudiced mind, and candid enquirer after truth, that God's chief design in selecting the *Israelites*, and guarding this people by an extraordinary providence, was to inspire them with the love of virtue, that they might be instrumental in proclaiming divine goodness, and displaying his wonderful works among the children of men, at such periods of time, and under such circumstances, as would best introduce true religion into the world, and extend its bright rays to the darkest and remotest parts of the globe. Did men but impartially peruse the sacred history, where these facts are apparently recorded, they would be thoroughly convinced, that the privileges of the Israelitish government, and the establishing of this benevolent scheme, was not principally instituted for their sakes, but originally intended for the universal benefit of mankind, that rational beings might be turned from their abominations, and from the worship of false deities, to worship and serve the one true and everlasting God. To expedite the extensive views of this plan, and to animate the *Israelites* to proceed in the prosecution thereof, the Almighty assures them of his paternal affection, and bestows
upon

upon his chosen, the indearing appellation of children, and so nearly concerns himself for their interest, that in comparison of them, he denominates all other strangers to him, and aliens to the commonwealth of *Israel*. Nay, so great was divine goodness to this people, that when they were in the utmost danger, and so surrounded on all sides with the immediate appearance of destruction, that no human help could procure their deliverance, nor any arm but that of omnipotence, defend and preserve them; the Almighty beholding their distress, compassionately interposed in their behalf, by miraculously opening a passage through the sea, and drowning the Egyptian army in the great deep, whilst he caused his chosen to march in triumph, and joyfully to sing the praises of their immortal and omnipotent deliverer. But notwithstanding God's preserving them in the wilderness by destroying their implacable enemies, feeding his elect with manna from heaven, and loading them with blessings of all kinds, yet, this dissatisfied people so slighted his favours, and so disregarded the rock of their salvation, that they forfeited their relation to God as children, and became obnoxious to his incensed displeasure. Upon due reflection, it might reasonably have been presumed, that persons so remarkably protected by providence, and so generously provided with the bounties of heaven, must have been so zealous for God's honour, that instead of swerving from their allegiance, and refusing submission to God's authority, they would upon all proper occasions, not only have

have vigorously exerted their faculties in forwarding their own salvation, and the salvation of their neighbours, but also have employed those powers, in bringing distant nations to the knowledge of God, and the constant exercise of unchangeable goodness. Well-founded as this presumption really is, the fact has proved quite otherwise, and the Jews are so far from promulgating the divine wisdom, and reverentially adoring God's glorious majesty, that they most seditiously revolted from him, and transferred that worship to the creature, which only belongs to the Creator, who is God over all, blessed for evermore. The prophets observing their degeneracy, and commiserating their wretchedness, most passionately addressed themselves to this people, and exhorted the Hebrews to a speedy repentance, as being the only rational ground of hope, and the likeliest expedient to prevent their present ruin, and future destruction. But they were so hardened in their iniquities, that no entreaties would change their inflexible dispositions, nor the most pathetic language make any impression upon them, or so much as soften their obdurate hearts. For by mingling with the idolatrous nations, and giving heed to their false prophets, the Hebrews were so unfaithful in God's service, so treacherous to their all-powerful preserver, and for ever adorable benefactor, that the Almighty withdrew his blessings from them, and no longer continued their defender, but delivered them up to the will of their enemies, and executed those judgments upon them,

them, which he had denounced by his holy prophets. So that this gainsaying people, whom neither mercies could reform, nor judgments reclaim, feel the terrible effects of God's anger, are now the living monuments of God's wrath, and memorable examples of his avenging justice. *Jerusalem* which was once the glory of the earth, and renowned throughout the world, was totally destroyed by the *Romans*; its stately edifices and magnificent buildings, were intirely consumed, and the whole country involved in one dreadful calamity. Were the principal ends of providential dispensations considered and weighed in the divine balances of the sanctuary, unless we imagine ourselves more righteous than others, we cannot reasonably suppose, that God will deal more favourably with us, if we continue in rebellion against him, than he did with his once beloved, and antient people the Jews. Because men must be blinded beyond imagination, or entertain the grossest conceptions of the deity, and most unworthy notions of the divine perfections, or it would be impossible to conceive that God will countenance impenitent offenders, or encourage such as continue in enormous practices. For God is of too pure and spotless a nature to have any communication with them, who are overspread with the leprosy of sin, and have rendered themselves vile in his sight. Would we candidly examine our own vices, and the various kinds of our national offences, we should soon discover their malignancy, and be made ingenuously to confess, that

that instead of having reason to hope our chastisements will be suspended, we have much greater reason to fear, and to be under more terrible apprehensions, that vengeance will quickly overtake us, and that our judgments will vastly exceed the *Israelites*. Vengeance is mine, saith the Lord, and I will repay it, the Lord will judge his people. These considerations should induce us to alter our conduct, and to walk more circumspectly for the future, lest the Lord should appear in terrible majesty, and fill us with the deadly wine of terror and astonishment. If they to whom pertained the adoption, and the giving of the law, the covenants of God, and the promises, could sin away all those glorious priviledges, what security can we have that abusing the same favours, and despising the same mercies, we shall not be responsible for our enormities, and severely smart under the divine correction. St. *Paul's* inference is so just, that it will not admit of any dispute. "If God spare not the natural branches, take heed lest he also spare not you, therefore be not high-minded, but fear," or we by delaying the work of repentance, may finish a sinful course in final perdition. For if they died without mercy, who despised *Moses's* law, of how much sorer punishment shall we be thought worthy, who tread under foot the Son of God, and count the blood of the covenant wherewith we should have been sanctified, an unholy thing, and do despite to the spirit of grace.

The more effectually to awaken your attention, and rouse you out of the lethargy of sin, I shall lay before you some of the most reproachful and prevailing vices of the age, that by seeing them in their frightful colours, and by being acquainted with their evil consequences, we may be brought inwardly to detest them, and to have those vices in the utmost abhorrence. God has long tried us with mercies, and visited us with judgments, and though we are not brought to repentance, yet he graciously continues his merciful indulgences, in supplying us with all kinds of blessings, in giving us the former and the latter rain in due season, and filling our hearts with food and gladness, but we contumeliously pervert those mercies, and ungratefully treat the blessed author. Notwithstanding the refractoriness of our hearts, and the irreclaimableness of our lives, our divine benefactor is of so compassionate a nature, and so desirous of overcoming our obstinacy by the melting charms of kindness, and the engaging motives of love, that we abound in plenty of all things, and heaven deals so generously by us, that we are wholly unacquainted with scarcity, and utter strangers to any pressing calamity. These are such instances of divine munificence, and that tender regard providence has for our welfare, that even in the most eminent dangers, and when war roars terribly round about us, and other great and opulent cities are laid in ashes, and the poor distressed inhabitants put to the sword, we are preserved from these desolating evils, and enjoy every

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blessing

blessing without interruption, that tends to make us happy in this world, and exalt us to glory and happiness in the next. Yet how few of us acknowledge God's goodness, or the hand of providence in any of those things, or from a deep sense of these mercies, and our obligations to the supreme director, say, let us now turn from our wicked devices, and steadily walk in the fear of the Lord. Neither has his judgments changed our manners, or brought us to a better mind, but we audaciously deride his punishments, and still continue as licentious as ever. The prescriptions of right reason are wilfully violated, and men are governed by brutish desires; they have lost the ingenuous bashfulness of nature, and are so deceived by their false principles, that these miserably deluded creatures, artificially gloss over their foulest deformities, and reproachfully justify their grossest vices. And notwithstanding they are surrounded with the heavenly light, and the bright beams of God's glorious gospel, the blessed means of everlasting salvation, men are as impure and impenitent as those in pagan darkness. For though they profess the illustrious name of Jesus, yet do these hypocritical pretenders to religion, most sacrilegiously and blasphemously abuse their profession. Godliness, which is in itself the chiefest glory of our intelligent natures, and the brightest ornament of our immortal souls, is often made a pretence for the blackest villanies, and the name of the most high introduced to serve the vilest purposes, and to

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cover the blackest designs. When men cannot oppress securely, or imagine themselves in any danger of being betrayed, what false colours do they put on, and various cunning devices form, to give a fair countenance to their deceitful actions, and to conceal their horrid dissimulations. Whoever maturely considers these things, and revolves the evil consequences of them in his mind, cannot truly say we need not be under any terrifying apprehensions, or that we have no reason to dread God's angry visitations, since we are guilty of the most flagrant vices, and hourly exposed to the most alluring temptations. Nay, vice is grown so very predominant, and the town is so infested by lewd women, that our streets are crowded with common prostitutes, who continually watch every opportunity, to seduce unwary innocent creatures, into those dens of lewdness, that they may instruct them in, and inure them to, the foul and filthy practices of debauchery, till they become intirely devided of shame and modesty, and are thoroughly hardened in their iniquities. By being thus ignominiously engaged, and profusely supplied with intoxicating liquors, the fumes of which noxious draughts, and other wicked arts, the procuress employs, to stifle the gauling reproofs of conscience, and to silence the clamours of a guilty mind, that she may render them fit for lewd and diabolical purposes. Surely, none can reflect on these things without horror, or without discovering the keenest indignation against them, but more especially we that are parents, lest any of our

own offspring should be decoyed into these brothels of uncleanness, and there so taught to extinguish natural affections, as to live without any concern for the miseries, and agonies of the parents. For whilst under these infernal instructors, the miserable creature spends its time in revelling, and the tender mother's cheeks are bathing with her tears, and the father is bewailing the loss of his child ; the child whom they instructed with the utmost care and tenderness, and from whom they expected many happy days, is by the instigation of those debauched wretches, likely to cause them continual grief of heart, and to bring their grey hairs with sorrow to the grave.

As for conjugal affections, they are most shamefully disregarded, and the sacred ordinance of marriage is frequently violated, and most satyrically exposed. By means of which egregious breach, and ludicrously treating this holy institution, adultery although repugnant to the inviolable laws of chastity, and expressly forbidden by God himself, is become so very fashionable, that the adulterer commits the horrid deed, without remorse, or fear of punishment, and is so far from being ashamed of his criminal conversation, that he endeavours to extenuate its turpitude, and even to boast of the horrid fact in impertinent dashes of obscenity, and in the most fulsome language. So that all the comforts of marriage, and the joys which result from this source, are wholly lost in fearful apprehensions, and perpetual evil surmises. The husband is for ever deprived of that satisfaction, which arises from

from the wife's affectionate fidelity, presuming not only on her being faithful to his bed, but in being also the companion of his life, and the sharer in all his fortunes. In the room of which blessings, succeed the most painful, and the most tormenting passions. The woman by the violation of this sacred compact, and neglecting to observe its solemn injunctions, commonly pays dear for her treachery, by involving herself and her spurious offspring in the utmost extremity and distress. For the husband becomes cold, and utterly averse to her, and she (if ever sensible of the grievous offence) fearing his further resentment, has her mind crowded with anxious thoughts, and her breasts so filled with horror, that all her measures are disconcerted, and all her affairs totally disjointed. In this state of confusion and distraction, helpless infants are neglected, and innocent children left unprovided for, generally speaking, without one certain relative to relieve them, or even so much as to commiserate, their forlorn, and deplorable circumstances.

These are not the only vices of this polite age. The vile practice of gaming being so prevalent, so destructive to the welfare of society, and the general good of mankind, calls so loudly for immediate redress, that men must be enemies to their own interest, and guilty of the most palpable remissness, if they do not endeavour to hinder this growing evil, and intirely to obstruct its progress. This pernicious diversion reigns so epidemically, and spreads its baneful influences so powerfully, that men
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frequently leave their ordinary business, to follow this horrid mystery of iniquity, and spend that time which should be employed in honestly providing for themselves, and those belonging to them, amongst the most pernicious class of monsters, and pestilential herd of sharpers. In order to propagate this noxious custom, and render it more conspicuous, places of public resort are appointed, and almost ever where to be met with, for the exercise of this scandalous employment, and for carrying on these intriguing scenes of wickedness, by persons of the most infamous characters, who watch every opportunity to allure the unthinking, and induce them into their hellish assemblies. By means of which cunning devices, and the imaginary prospect of gain, these miserably deluded creatures, waste their intervals of time, and all their valuable moments, in learning the fraudulent arts of injustice, and the base methods of overreaching each other. When men are thus sordidly engaged, and under the power of those crafty allurements, their minds are so intent upon their pleasures, that instead of vigilantly exercising some lawful calling, and taking care of their never dying spirits, the thoughts of industry, are most scornfully disregarded, and all the sacred acts of piety and devotion superseded, and entirely neglected. So that for the sake of those bewitching diversions, and others of the like enchanting nature, men are often so reduced in their fortunes, and driven to such deplorable circumstances, that they can see no possibility of relief, except it
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be by the charitable benevolence of others, or by receiving the slender pittance of a parish. Those that constantly attend the gaming tables, or immoderately pursue any other diversions, have their desires too much inflamed, and their thoughts too intensely busied, to think of the lamentable distresses at home, and the miseries that their families endure for want of the common necessities of life, by their not properly employing their time, and assiduously using such methods as divine providence hath appointed, and which would have supported them and their families decently and comfortably.

And as if men were not wicked enough, nor their crimes sufficiently aggravating, they seem resolved to supply that deficiency, by irreverently treating God's tremendous name, and impudently defying the holy one of *Israel*. In whatever part of this city we go, or into whatever street we turn, oaths are continually grating in our ears, and the air filling with volleys of bitter curses, and men are much often heard to call for vengeance from heaven, to sink them and their fellow-creatures into the bottomless pit of misery and destruction, than to cry out from a deep sense of this reigning vice, Lord save us from this and all our other vices, or we perish eternally. What strange infatuation is this, for such vile objects, such poor feeble creatures, to fly in the face of their creator, and in their furious transports, to invoke the Deity for damnation on themselves, and all that God has created in his own image, and Christ has ransomed with the price of his blood.

Surely,

Surely, no stupidity can equal this, nor nothing more betray a defect in the understanding, than for beings who pretend to the use of reason, and that they are capable of choosing good from evil, to exercise their rational powers in depreciating their natures, and to live in the habitual practice of such an evil, as produceth neither pleasure nor advantage, but will, if not atoned for by sincere repentance, deprive them of their title to future blessedness, and the never fading glories of eternity. And notwithstanding the horrible nature of this sin, and swearing is so prodigious in itself, that no aggravation can heighten it, nor any excuse lessen it, yet this sin is so customary in conversation, and so familiar to some shameful wretches, that when every sober person trembles to hear them, they without either fear or remorse keep on their horrid imprecations, and venting their most shocking speeches. And what is still worse, the hearts of such offenders are so hardened, that no arguments will restrain their impetuous rage, or deter them from insulting of him, who hath all power in heaven and in earth, to provoke the eyes of his glory. I say one would scarcely believe, that unless men were deficient in their understanding, or imagined that the deity was a revengeful being, who delighted in destroying his creatures, they could not be guilty of such horrible execrations, as those of mutually cursing each other, or of praying to the Supreme Deity, to employ his sovereign power in damning their souls and bodies to all eternity, did we not hourly
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hear those wretches, and were daily witnesses of their monstrous profanations. It was said to them of old time, because of swearing the land mourneth. If this was said of the land of *Canaan*, how truly may this be said of our land? For from the noble to the peasant, from the court to the cottage, swearing abounds to such a degree, there is hardly the like in any nation under heaven, or where the divine omnipresence is less revered, or God's all-seeing eye so little regarded; but let the blasphings of men be ever so great, God almighty can easily silence their furies, and make them thoroughly sensible of their folly, who thus boldly challenge him to do his worst, by calling those blasphemers to an account, and by severely punishing them for the dreadful abuse of speech, and not employing their tongues to his glory. Beware then of exasperating the divine justice, or of taking God's sacred name in vain, lest he for our amazing insolence, and making such ungrateful returns for his mercies, should strike us dead in a moment, and confine us to those regions of horror, where we shall dwell in everlasting darkness, and sleep the eternal sleep of death. Besides, the terrible effects of these vices, and the miseries they have already occasioned in the world, there are other vices also equally pernicious, and of as fatal consequences. I mean the general neglect of religious duties, but more especially the duties of the sabbath, which should be the solemn business, and chief part of that day's employment. Men before the flood, observed this

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day in memory of the creation, and those after it, in memory of that and their deliverance from their egyptian bondage; but christians act from much higher motives, and infinitely greater mercies, namely, a deliverance from the wretched slavery of sin, and an advancement to an eternal rest with angels in the realms of perfect freedom, and in the immortal glories of futurity. Notwithstanding the inestimable value of those mercies, and that the sabbath, was instituted, and designed for the spiritual and temporal benefit of mankind, yet this sacred institution is shamefully perverted, and those mercies so egregiously abused, that even creatures formed with the powers of reason, and capable of discerning their most interesting concern, indiscreetly abandon their own happiness, live under the ruling power of sin, and wallow like swine in the muddy sources of iniquity. By thus impiously turning God's mercies into wantonness, profane delinquents are so captivated with brutal delights, and the poor momentary enjoyments of sense, that they become lovers of pleasure more than lovers of God, and the sabbath which should be employed in divine adoration, and constantly attending the worship of God, is by many, spent in riotous living, and in the most horrid acts of profaneness. At length those libertines grow so hardened, and by consuming their time in vanity, contract such an aversion to the celestial exercise of devotion, that the Lord's-day is no longer esteemed holy, or dedicated to the immediate honour of him, who
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is an inexhaustible source of goodness, and the fountain of all our comforts and enjoyments, but as a day set apart for rural excursions and which often begins, and ends in contradicting all the rules of sobriety, and common decency. For by the fumes of intoxicating liquors, and overcharging the stomach with superfluous diet, abandoned criminals are so emboldened in their iniquities, that they impudently deride the offices of religion, and scoff at the morning sacrifice of prayer, and the evening approaches to God's awful throne. Men thus given up to lewdness, and to work all uncleanness with greediness, pay little regard to God's injunctions, or to any of his alarming judgments, but so prefer the nauseating pleasures of sin, before the commands of the most high God, that instead of devoutly discharging the duties of the sabbath, they are generally guilty of the vilest abominations thereon, and commit greater immoralities on that day, than on any of the other six.

For while the sanctuary of God is almost deserted, the little receptacles of drunkenness and debauchery are thronged, and places of public entertainment vastly crowded, in which are exhibited the most shocking scenes of intemperance, and mens spirits are so inflamed with drinking, that you can discern no difference betwixt them and the most hideous monsters, but by the appearance of the outward form, and publicly manifesting their own shame. From hence it comes to pass that every order of men, even those that are exercised in servile employments, instead of repairing to the

house of God, and humbly offering up their petitions to heaven, for a blessing upon their honest endeavours, resort openly during the time of divine service, without any controul from the civil magistrate, or reprimand from the parish officers, to those nurseries of irreligion and profaneness, and prodigally spend on the sabbath what they had earned the week before, to the impoverishing themselves and greatly distressing their poor families. These tents of wickedness are become fashionable, and so much in request among both sexes, that in them they form the vilest schemes, and are encouraged to commit the greatest villanies. For by an intimacy with such lewd acquaintance, and complying with their horrid suggestions, the most desperate enterprizes are undertaken, and frequently accomplished; servants are induced to rob their masters, children prevailed on to defraud their parents, and to use such methods for supporting their extravagancies, as must finally prove their utter ruin, and bring them to an untimely end. This has been the fate of many males, and likewise of many females, who by neglecting to attend religious worship, and misemploying their time on the sabbath, have been turned aside from the paths of virtue, and by the warm solicitations of ensnaring debauchees, have fallen an easy prey to their lustful desires, and thereby fixed on themselves such marks of infamy, as nothing but time can wholly remove, and unfeigned repentance totally obliterate. Could we see these unguarded creatures in their pensive hours, in
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their retired solitary moments, dreadfully repeating the penitential scene, we should perceive the bitterest agonies within, and that conscience raises such ferments in their souls, as dissipates all the powers of nature, and renders their misery intolerable, and almost impossible to be perfectly described. For when meditating on the breach of the sabbath, and on their shameful prostitution and its reproachful consequences, they, from an inward consciousness of guilt, and the oppressive weight thereof, are frequently fetching the deepest sighs, and crying out in broken accents, that their sins and iniquities are too heavy for them to bear.

There are many other abominations, which the time will not permit us to consider, but there is one act of profaneness that cannot be passed by in silence, without reflecting upon the honour of God, and casting the utmost contempt upon religion; that is, our detestable behaviour in the sanctuary, and the indecent manner so performing that worship, which should be performed with the profoundest solemnity. Because the object of our religious worship, is that awful being, before whom, angels cover their heads, and cherubims veil their faces, and from whom all creatures derive their excellencies, from the sun in the firmament of heaven, that bright orb of light, to the glittering glow-worm that shines in the grass. If God be thus transcendently great in himself, and the glory of his divinity so dazzling, that immortal spirits appear before him with the highest reverence,

surely we poor reptiles who grovel upon earth, and are vastly inferior to angels in dignity, should approach him with the profoundest submission, and worship him with as much intenseness of thought, as the frailty of our natures, and our present capacities will permit. But instead of seriously addressing God's majesty, and spiritually worshipping him in his sanctuary, that we may be influenced by the power of religion, be capable of maintaining its divine energy in our hearts, and an habitual sense of God's goodness on our minds, the service of that sacred place is often so shamefully performed and attended to with such coldness and indifferency, that sober heathens would detest such a behaviour in their temples, and such irreverence to their false deities, as is paid to the true God in his house of prayer, and is greatly regretted and complained of, by all serious christians. And notwithstanding religious offices are so divinely holy, and designed to promote the noblest and sublimest purposes, by qualifying us for the divine reception, yet those offices are so reproachfully hurried over, and said in such a careless and indevout manner, as if nothing more was required of them, who minister in sacred things, than to read those offices as matter of mere form, and to repeat the number of prayers directed and prescribed by the church. In order to remove those grievances, and remedy those complaints, let us labour to affect our hearts with the spirit of devotion, and to kindle in our souls the heavenly flame, that whenever we enter into the
sanctuary

sanctuary of God, we may with united voices earnestly join in beseeching the king of heaven, to accompany our supplications with his efficacious grace, that our ardent breathings may reach the mercy-seat, and be accepted at his tremendous throne. Should we neglect to cultivate internal piety, and wholly place religion in ritual observances, we shall be esteemed as hypocrites by men, and without repentance, finally rejected by God, who will say to all such worshippers, as worship him only with their lips, when their hearts are far from him, (a) bring no more vain oblations, your new moons, and your sabbaths, my soul hateth, they are a trouble unto me, I am weary to bear them, and when you spread forth your hands, I will hide mine eyes, yea, when you make many prayers, I will not hear. It is clear to every unprejudiced mind, that the vices

(a) Would men but allow themselves time for reflection, and impartially enquire into the abounding of iniquity, they need not wonder at the rapidity of vice, or that piety and virtue declines so much amongst us, when it is blasphemously affirmed in the pulpit, and audaciously published from the press, that men may be the children of God, and the peculiar favorites of heaven; whilst they are doing and propagating the works of the devil.

Whatever men may imagine, unless they renounce these detestable erroneous notions, and embrace the truth as it is in Jesus, they will forfeit the divine clemency, and subject themselves to his wrathful displeasure. For the conditions required by God, are faith, repentance, love and obedience, without the exercise of these divine and moral duties, no human absolution can do us any good, with the exercise of these duties, no human excommunication can do us any harm.

ces which I have cursorily run over, are of such an infectious nature, that as they tend to corrupt individuals to enervate the bands of human society, and to dissolve the sinews of government; so they likewise alienate our minds from God, make us perpetual drudges to our lusts, and render us unworthy of the divine regard and attention. Although we may perceive the absolute necessity of repentance, and the impossibility of appeasing God's wrath without it, yet there is such a perverseness in our natures, and such a stubbornness in our wills, that instead of using the blessed means of reconciliation, and endeavouring to redeem our mispent time, that the deity may be rendered propitious to us, there is great reason to believe, that there is not a more general contempt of God, nor more daring wickedness to be found, except it be in the unfathomable gulph, but here description fails, and enquiry ceases.

It were endless to describe the several ways in which men have corrupted themselves, they have found out so many inventions; but as the sins which have been already considered, are the sources of all our licentious excesses, and do produce the most terrible effects, I shall wave all further consideration on particulars, and employ the remaining part of this discourse, in exhorting men to renounce their impieties, and blasphemies, and all other abominations and horrid provocations, that the design of this day's solemnity, may be duly answered,

answered, and this religious fast rightly improved. Therefore let us humbly prostrate ourselves before the Lord, and in the deepest strains of internal humiliation, bewail our own crying sins, and the crying sins of the nation, *and turn unto the Lord with all our hearts, with fasting, and with weeping, and with mourning; for the Lord is gracious and merciful, slow to anger, and of great kindness, and repenteth him of the evil. Let the priests the ministers of the Lord, weep between the porch and the altar, and let them say, spare thy people O Lord, and give not thine heritage to reproach; but deliver us O Lord from our offences, and spare us for the greatness of thy mercies.* This method divine goodness hath appointed, and would we be restored to the divine favour, we must not delay this work of repentance, but immediately begin to curb our head-strong passions, and to purify our sinful hearts, by daily acts of inward mortification, and godly contrition, by the constant exercise of fervent prayer, and the devout practice of heavenly meditation, *For it is time to seek the Lord, till he come and rain righteousness among us.* By seeking the Lord, is meant, seeking his favour, which is the ground of all our comfort and security, or his gracious aid and spiritual assistance, without which, all our labours are vain, and all we do is ineffectual. Would we have our designs attended with success, we must not depend upon an arm of flesh, nor wholly trust to the greatest human sagacity, but submissively apply ourselves to God for help, and dili-

gently discharge those duties that God has enjoined, as the means to procure the divine concurrence, to prevent the calamities we so highly deserve, and to save an incorrigible people from destruction. Weak as we indigent creatures are in ourselves, and perplexed as our affairs may seem to be, let the schemes of the crafty be ever so intricate, if we will yield obedience to him, who directs the operations of the natural world, over rules the various motions of the moral world, and carries all his purposes into execution, through all the different powers of opposition, and intervening difficulties that encounter it, he will not only assist us with his divine counsel, and furnish us with such supplies of divine strength, as will enable us to repel the powers of darkness, and entirely to defeat their most subtle designs; but this our God who brings order out of confusion, and by his strength setteth fast the mountains, will also establish us, upon such a foundation, as neither the machinations of men can undermine, nor the most malicious efforts of devils overthrow.

Would we enjoy the blessings that result from obedience, and be supported by the mighty power of heaven, let us of whatever rank or quality, denomination or profession, no longer stand foolishly contending, but instantly lay aside all our prejudices, and most egregiously frivolous excuses, and vigorously unite our best endeavours to hinder the progress of immorality and profaneness, and to promote the exercise of piety and virtue, that we in the hands of providence, may
be

be the happy instruments of forwarding a personal, and a national reformation.

That this laudable work may not be obstructed, nor the amendment of individuals by any means retarded, I beseech you by the tender mercies of God, and in the bowels of a compassionate Jesus, to beware of indulging unprofitable disputations, or espousing such notions, as in their consequences, tend to subvert the salutary principles of piety, and the vital parts of real genuine religion, or we instead of laying a foundation for peace, may by our senseless wranglings, inadvertently sow the seeds of strife and contention, and become so violent about matters of mere speculation, that we shall be wholly indifferent about things of the utmost concern, and the greatest importance. Men that are warmly engaged in disputes, and have their minds inflamed by repeated contradictions, often grow so zealous for their singular opinions, that any one would really imagine, all their hopes of eternity depended upon them, and that all spiritual blessings were obtained by them, whilst that devotion and charity, that honesty and integrity, which were once the chiefest care, and the brightest ornament of the christian church, are now, God knows, almost disregarded, or held but in little esteem amongst us. Since (c) angry disputations have such an evil tendency,

(c) The words of one of great probity and piety, may be justly applied to the pretended explainers of mysteries, and the warm dealers in controversies, i. e. such things as are hid in the secret counsels of heaven, and wrapped up in clouds of impenetrable darkness.

tendency, and are such deadly obstructions to real holiness, and to the universal peace and happiness of free agents, we should carefully avoid the

We crowd about a little spark,
Learnedly striving in the dark;
Never so bold as when most blind,
Run fastest when the truth's behind.

Nothing does so vehemently alienate mens affections, as variety of judgment in matters of religion. On this subject they cannot disagree, but presently they fall foul of each other, and when once religion divides mens minds, no other interest will unite them, and where zeal dissolves the bands of friendship, and breaks asunder the endearing ties of nature, mens minds are generally so irritated by opposition, that they become utterly averse to mutual forbearance, and instead of acting like reasonable beings, they act more like furious beasts of prey, and pursue each other to destruction. What desolations have public controversies occasioned, how many princes have been dethroned and murdered, by their own subjects, what numbers of innocent men, women, and children, have been banished, how profusely has their blood been spilt, how scandalously hath the vilest offences, and even the most palpable perjuries by a strange kind of metamorphosis, and by the interest of the churches power, been solemnly consecrated into christian graces, and the most heroical virtues. Witness those violent contests about election and absolute reprobation, and many other doctrines that I might instance.

The sharp contention about which, have introduced many calamities into the world, and made terrible slaughter among mankind. But none are more expert at embroiling of kingdoms, or at butchering the human species, than the defenders of transubstantiation, a doctrine so evidently absurd in itself, and full of such numerous contradictions, that no one that ever rightly employed his reason, or could properly use his rational faculties, would have consented to such monstrous absurdities, had they not been fortified with fire and faggot, and such methods taken to send heretics out of the world, as are used to force hypocrites into the church. For we are told of a change without an alteration, of a creation without the interposition of a creator, that what we see and feel, what we taste and smell

the entering into them, or we by our unchristian debates, and impertinent cavils, may share the fate of our forefathers, and perish in the like dreadful catastrophe. By thus giving way to fruitless enquiries, and by augmenting the number of our divisions, we open a breach for our revengeful adversaries, and are exposed to the tyrannical decisions of that church, whose blood-thirsty emissaries, are daily meditating our ruin, and inventing engines of cruelty, to affect and compleat our destruction. Moreover, by the sophistical management of our debates, and the fallacious arguments generally used to support them, we tempt the enemies of the Lord to blaspheme, and not without some colour of reason to believe, that all our pretensions to religion are only deceit and visionary, and wholly designed to impose upon the credulous, and not to propagate the unchangeable laws of morality,

smell to be bread, is real flesh and blood, and that it is at the same time, both in heaven and in earth, that it is eaten as a morsel; and adored as a deity, that we swallow what we worship, that the accidents continue intirely the same, and yet are wholly changed.

It is indeed a melancholy consideration, and a most dreadful thing to think of, that many christians should so hotly engage in idle disputations, when they are so prejudicial to the peace of mankind, and have proved so fatal to the church of God, that even in some parts of the world, where those disputes have prevailed, and mens minds were inflamed by passion, they have almost extirpated our holy profession, and brought it into the utmost contempt. For it was the quarrels between the eastern and western churches, and their perpetual wranglings among themselves, which contributed greatly to weaken their interest, to the removal of christianity out of those empires, and to the planting of Mahometism in its stead.

morality, or the genuine truths of the gospel. Had men the interest of religion at heart, or did men believe the principles of it themselves, instead of hindering its progress by a blind intemperate zeal, or by contending about such things as are least understood, if not altogether impossible to be known, they would endeavour to check all such acrimonious dispositions, and arduously labour to promote the practice of religion, by employing their present valuable opportunities, and the few remaining moments of their existence, in plucking up the rancorous weed of sin, and washing their polluted souls from their defilements, in the efficacious tears of unfeigned repentance, and the purifying virtues of deep humiliation. Almighty God has been wonderfully good to us, and still continues his loving kindness towards us, in blessing the arms of our gracious sovereign, and in giving us success over his, and our implacable enemies. Would we enjoy the continuance of those blessings, and have them transmitted to the latest posterity, we must not indolently begin this work of reformation, but each of us by an upright behaviour, by the amiable exercise of justice and mercy, must vigilantly endeavour to adorn our holy profession, and the doctrine of God our Saviour in all things, lest we for the horrible abuse of those mercies, should provoke the Lord to come forth in anger, and to smite us as he did the Philistines, with the sword of the destroying angel. For if the sacred principles of religion are despised, and their divine influences burlesqued and obstructed,

structed, God whose providence extends to each individual, and to the whole system of beings, can instantly change the most prosperous scene of things, and notwithstanding the happiness of our present situation, distress us as much as any other kingdom, and by his powerful interposition make us to know, that it is God that ruleth in *Jacob*, and over all the kingdoms of the world. Whilst we are drawing schemes in the dust, or imagining ourselves most secure, and without any apprehensions of dangers, some fatal calamity may suddenly alarm us, and involve us in the utmost extremity. The brightest glories of this world pass away, and all its pompous scenes may instantly disappear, and leave not a tract behind them. Crowns and sceptres must crumble into dust, and be interred among the scattered particles of mortality. The mightiest monarch cannot prevent the vicissitudes of life, any more than the poorest cottager; but all must yield to the innumerable changes thereof, and he that is clothed in purple to-day, may be wrapped in a shroud to-morrow.

To conclude, let us not defer this internal sorrow for sin, but instantly renew our vows of better obedience, and devoutly prepare for our final dissolution, that we may be ready against that awful event, and that most interesting concern, lest when death stealeth upon us, like a thief in the night, we be found sleeping among the servants of iniquity, and should in the midst of our security, be awakened by the painful wounds of conscience, and by the ter-

rors of this universal tyrant. For when we are wounded by his piercing dart, and stand trembling upon the borders of eternity, we shall then know the real worth and excellency of time, and so value a few days and hours, that to recover the enjoyment of them, we would willingly part with our richest treasures, provided we could procure the remission of our sins, and a well-grounded assurance of God's pardon and love, before our relation to this life ceases, and we are seen no more for ever.

Whatsoever then our hands findeth to do, let us do it with all our might, for there is no work, nor device, nor knowledge, nor wisdom in the grave, whither we are all hastening (*d*). Therefore let us not shamefully stand unresolved, nor hearken to the fallacious suggestions of vitiated appetites, but let us regulate our vile affections, by the efficacious precepts

(*d*) To die, is the great debt and tribute we owe to nature, tombs of marble, and monuments of brass, which should perpetuate our memories, pay it themselves; and the stateliest pyramid of them all, which wealth and science have erected, has lost its figure, and stands cut off in the travellers horizon. Kingdoms and provinces, towns and cities, have their periods; and when those principles and powers which at first cemented and put them together, have performed their several revolutions, they fall back, and return to their primitive dust. Where is *Troy* and *Mycenæ*, *Thebes* and *Delos*, *Persepolis* and *Agrigentum*. What is become of *Nineveh* and *Babylon*, of *Cizicum* and *Mitylene*, the fairest towns that the sun ever shined upon, are now no more; their names only are left, and those are gradually falling themselves to decay, and in length of time will be forgotten, and involved with every thing in perpetual night; the world itself is perishable, and must—must come to an end.

cepts of the gospel, and the purifying maxims of religion; for time itself flies swiftly away, and the king of terrors rides in triumph, his dominion reaches from sea to sea, and his power alarms every part of the globe. Since human life is so very uncertain, that there is no dependency upon any sublunary possessions, nor any possibility of avoiding the fatal blow, but the inevitable hour will come, God only knows how soon; it behoves us heartily to grieve for our transgressions, and solicitously endeavour by an holy circumspection, and by final perseverance in well doing, earnestly to sue for the almighty protection of him, whose right hand is become glorious in power, and who is at all times a safe refuge for his people. For unless by contrition, we are reconciled unto him, and by obedience strengthen our alliance with him, we can promise ourselves no security from God, nor have we any rational ground to hope, that God who has wonderfully changed the gloomy face of things, and hitherto disconcerted the malicious schemes of our enemies, will always continue to be our defender, and display his divine power and presence in our favour, and in frustrating the attempts of our invidious foes.

Would we avert the afflicting hand of the destroyer, and be an acceptable people to the Lord, we must studiously resolve in this our day, to pursue the things that make for peace, before they be hid from our eyes, and our feet stumble upon the dark mountains, or we by being unfruitful in works of righteous-

ness, and not arming ourselves with the shield of holiness, may render the deity implacable towards us, ourselves incapable of repentance, and perish in the foul embraces of our iniquities. For now *the ax is laid to the root of the trees, therefore, every tree that bringeth not forth good fruit, is hewn down, and cast into the fire.*

May these considerations soften our hard obdurate hearts, and warm our souls with the sacred fire of devotion, that being duly qualified to approach God's awful presence, we may ardently implore the father of mercies, and the God of the spirits of all flesh, to incline the hearts of princes to peace, and to hasten that blessed time, when men shall beat their swords into plough-shares, and their spears into pruning hooks, that being disengaged from the horrid work of butchering each other, both princes and subjects may incessantly supplicate him, who is the liberal author of every good and perfect gift, to give us new hearts and contrite spirits, and to enable us vigilantly to proceed in promoting the honour of God, and universally join in forwarding the salvation of men. When we are thus penitentially employed, and imitating the laudable example of the benevolent Jesus, in subduing the bitter spirits of revengeful men, and in cherishing and improving, the forgiving dispositions of humility, we shall escape the divine threatenings, become proper objects of the divine care, and have such an interest in our high-priest, and all-powerful intercessor, at God's right hand, as will cause the Lord to interpose for our safety

ty, to deliver and preserve us from the wrath of our enemies, and to rain the blessing of righteousness and peace among us. The assiduous discharge of these advantageous duties, and acting suitably to the uncorrupted reason of mankind, and to the mercies which providence daily enriches us with, and does so bountifully bestow upon us, will add a beautiful lustre to our moral character, will make our pious endeavours renowned and applauded throughout the world, and our Jerusalem the praise and admiration of the whole earth. *Then shall our light break forth as the morning, and our righteousness as the noon-day; God shall come and not keep silence, he shall save us from the hands of our enemies, and put them to open shame that hate us.*

Note, My design in taking notice of our unreasonable divisions, and the feuds and animosities that are occasioned by them, was to beget in us an abhorrence of them, and that we might avoid all such pernicious disputes, which have done so much mischief in the world, and set men at variance against one another. For as the judicious Mr. *Hooker* observes, the time will come, when a few words spoken with meekness, humility, and love, shall be more acceptable than volumes of controversies, which commonly destroy charity, the very essence of real genuine piety, and the very best part of true religion.

T H E E N D.

